

Event: 14th APEC Women Leaders Network Meeting
Date: Tuesday and Wednesday, 4 and 5 August, 2009
(Speaking slot on 5 August)
Time: 11.00am–12.40pm (Speaking slot is 11.30am–11.45am)
Venue: Raffles City Convention Centre, 2 Stamford Road, Singapore 178882
Topic: Best-Practice Models of Work-Life Integration

SPEECH BY MS TERESA LIM, MANAGING DIRECTOR, IBM SINGAPORE, AT THE 14TH APEC WOMEN LEADERS NETWORK MEETING AT RAFFLES CITY CONVENTION CENTRE, ON WEDNESDAY, 5 AUGUST 2009

Good morning,

1) Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to this seminal gathering of women leaders. I would like to start by asking you, by a show of hands, how many of you wish that you had more than 24 hours in a day? And, how many of you wish that you could do the things you want to do, but never get around to doing it?

2) Well, the cold reality is that most, if not all, of us face these challenges everyday. And this brings us to a topic which is rapidly growing in importance in today's new work culture, global integration, and changing social norms.

3) Why is work-life integration so vital in this day and age? It is because of today's "New World of Work". This refers to a highly globalised, on-demand business environment in which the traditional 9-to-5 work schedule is no longer the norm, and low-cost communications technology is leading to a "24x7x365" work schedule. Evolving family and social structures are changing employee needs, perceptions and expectations. For example, families today tend to be nuclear. Parents need to pay greater attention to taking care of their dependent children and the elderly. These factors put significant pressures on employees to balance their work and personal commitments, and create an urgent need for organisations to devise ways to help employees manage the two well. Work-life integration is no longer just an organisational 'frill'. It is a business imperative.

The IBM way: from 'balance' to 'integration'

4) Let me tell you a bit about IBM's take on work-life integration. Through our employee surveys, such as the Global Work/Life Survey, employees have told us that adequate work-life integration is one of the primary reasons why they work for and remain with IBM.

5) IBM believes that though we may not be able to change the continuous, on-demand nature of the New World of Work, we can definitely create flexibility in where and when employees work. This flexibility enables employees to integrate both their work-related and other commitments. This is why it is called work-life integration: it is one step ahead of just 'balance'. It means that IBMers can work in a manner that they are able to manage their personal commitments even during traditional 'work-hours'.

6) While any organisation, IBM included, may put in place highly comprehensive measures for work-life integration, they will be ineffective if they are not supported by an enabling organisational culture and a strong set of values. I have personally spoken to many employees from various organisations on this issue. I was struck when they told me that, though their companies had several work-life integration initiatives such as family-care leave, they are reluctant to make use of them for fear that it will reflect negatively on their commitment. This simply means that these organisations do not have an enabling climate in which the values of trust and integrity are upheld and expected from each employee.

7) At IBM, we have certain foundational values which guide us in every decision and action. One of them is trust and personal responsibility in all relationships. We recognise that each employee has unique needs and we are committed to providing appropriate mechanisms for employees to meet these needs. Employees, on their part, are expected to behave with integrity and responsibility while making use of these mechanisms. Without this strong foundation of values, our work-life integration policies would be ineffective.

8) IBM's employees are offered a range of Workforce Flexibility options. One of our work-life integration best-practices is the 'Mobility Programme', which equips employees with the technical freedom to work from anywhere outside of an IBM office. More than 65% of IBM Singapore's workforce is mobile. Other options include a flexible workweek schedule, part-time employment, leave of absence programmes, and work-life leave. Consistent with our value of trust, we give our employees the freedom to choose from a range of options and create their own customised work-life solution. We also have pioneering facilities for needs such as mental health counselling. Our special Employee Assistance Programme provides anonymous professional assessment and consultation for employees and their families on personal issues. Our WorkLife Essentials is an online

portal which contains resources on how to better manage work and personal responsibilities including childcare, elder care, and also personal care. The IBM Club is an internal group which brings employees, retirees and their families together to participate in a host of socio-cultural, recreational and charitable activities and makes employees feel more engaged with the IBM Family through programmes such as Kidz@Work day and IBM Day.

9) These initiatives have generated positive responses. In our 2007 Global Work/Life Survey, employees have indicated that with workplace flexibility, the difficulties they face in devoting adequate time and attention to meeting both work and personal commitments have decreased. There has been a 50% increase in the number of employees working from home from 2004 to 2007. A number of employees have also conveyed a decline in their perceptions of having to do unnecessary work. I am delighted to share with you that, in 2008, IBM Singapore won the biennial Work-Life Excellence Award conferred by the Tripartite Committee on Work-Life Strategy under the Ministry of Manpower.

Leading by example

10) IBM's leaders also actively demonstrate their commitment to work-life programmes. For example, I am currently the Executive Sponsor for work-life integration for IBM's Growth Market Units (GMU), which comprises 140 countries out of 174 in which IBM operates. In this capacity, I provide leadership and am responsible for driving various work-life integration programmes in the GMU. I am glad to share that our priorities this year include reinforcing leadership behaviours that encourage work-life integration, making employees more aware of the range of Flexible Work Options available and encouraging them to make greater use of these options, and increasing the facilities available for dependent care.

11) IBM emphasises a high-performance culture. Our leaders stress performance and living the IBM values as the criteria for success, not attendance in the workplace.

Conclusion

12) It all boils down to this: Do you trust your employees enough to give them the flexibility to enjoy adequate work-life integration? For success in

this area, transformational leadership is critical. Transformational leaders show individualised consideration for employee needs. By “walking the talk”, they act as role models to employees, and trust their employees to use the options available to them responsibly.

13) I would like to close by appealing to all the leaders present here to devote time and attention to creating an enabling climate and strong values of trust, so that employees may make full use of the work-life integration facilities available to them. For leaders, there is nothing more satisfying than seeing their staff enjoy happier and healthier lives, and thus deliver even more strongly to the business.

Thank you and enjoy the rest of the day!